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Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury
Second meeting
Geneva, 19–23 November 2018
Item 5 (k) of the provisional agenda*

Matters for consideration or action by the Conference of the Parties: secretariat

Offer by Switzerland to host a stand-alone secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in Geneva

Note by the secretariat

At its first meeting, the Conference of the Parties discussed issues relating to the secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury and adopted decision MC-1/11. Subsequently, the then president of Switzerland, Doris Leuthard, in a letter dated 7 December 2017, confirmed the content of the offer by the Government of Switzerland, made during the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to host the secretariat in Geneva. For the information of the Conference of the Parties at its second meeting, as agreed by the Government of Switzerland, the letter confirming the elements of the Swiss offer is set out in the annex to the present note.

* UNEP/MC/COP.2/1.

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Annex

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

President of the Swiss Confederation

CH-3003 Bern, GS-DETEC

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
Mr. Erik Solheim
Executive Director
P.O. Box 30552
Nairobi
Kenya

Bern, 7 December 2017

Offer of Switzerland to host a stand-alone Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in Geneva

Dear Executive Director, dear Erik

The first conference of the parties to the Minamata Convention (COP1) was held in Geneva from 24 to 29 September 2017. I am very satisfied with many outcomes as they imply a further step in our common endeavors to tackle this major global environmental and health challenge.

I welcome the decision to initially locate the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention as a stand-alone Secretariat in Geneva. We will have, at a later stage, to discuss the details of the Secretariat arrangement, namely the possibility to integrate the Minamata Secretariat into the existing structure of the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions.

Switzerland made, at COP 1, an offer to host the Secretariat in Geneva. As you are aware, this offer is not identical to the initial offer of Switzerland submitted in June 2015.

I would like here to confirm the content of the Minamata COP1 offer of Switzerland to host the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in Geneva. It comprises the following elements:

- A total sum of CHF 1,000,000.– each year to support the overall functioning of the Secretariat, to facilitate the implementation of the Convention and for holding meetings. This amount includes Switzerland's assessed contribution to the General Trust Fund as a member to the Convention.
- 60 per cent of the Swiss host country contribution of CHF 1 Mio is to be allocated to the General Trust Fund and 40 per cent is to be allocated to the Special Trust Fund to support developing country participation to the meetings of the Convention.
- The Secretariat of the Minamata Convention is already located in International Environment House (IEH) in Geneva, which is close to the European Headquarter of the United Nations and the many major intergovernmental organisations based in the city. Adequate office space for the permanent Secretariat will be provided rent free in the IEH together with the joint Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. Responsibility for security arrangements for the IEH are assumed in full by UN Security.

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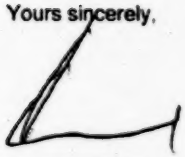
- Rent-free access to the Geneva International Conference Centre (CICG) for meetings of the Minamata Convention: The Geneva International Conference Centre was specially built to host diplomatic conferences. It is the property of the Swiss authorities and located in the immediate vicinity of the United Nations.
- The staff of the Secretariat and their families will enjoy all privileges and immunities granted by the Swiss government to the United Nations (UN) and its staff based in Switzerland, including freedom of action, inviolability, immunity of jurisdiction, tax privileges and preferential customs treatment. Delegates to the Minamata conferences and experts on mission will benefit the same privileges and immunities as delegates and experts participating at other UN meetings. Switzerland is a full Party to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 18 April 1961 and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 24 April 1963. As part of the UN, in Geneva, the Secretariat and its staff, delegates to conferences and experts on mission will continue to enjoy all the privileges and immunities conferred on the United Nations.
- Switzerland offers facilitated access to the Swiss labour market for spouses and unmarried and same-sex partners of the Secretariat staff. Insofar as they are residents in Switzerland and are part of the beneficiary's household, they will not be subject to any quotas for foreigners working in Switzerland or other specific regulations governing the labour market. The Geneva Welcome Center (CAGI) provides employment assistance to dependants of staff members.
- As part of the United Nations, the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention will benefit from the Host Government Agreement concluded between the United Nations and the Swiss Government. Therefore, no headquarters agreement will be required.

Let me conclude by reaffirming that Switzerland is committed to work with its partners towards a robust decision of the Conference of Parties to ensure the best possible Secretariat support for the Minamata Convention.

Yours sincerely,



Doris Leuthard
President of the Swiss Confederation